



Montana Food Bank Network

EXHIBIT 3
DATE 2/19/09
HB 583

February 18, 2009

Rep. John Sesso, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Montana State Capitol
Helena, Montana

Dear Chairman Sesso:

The Montana Food Bank Network is working on a project to build a Food Processing Center in the Deer Lodge Valley that would create a market for Montana producers, provide training in food processing for inmates at Montana State Prison, and provide much-needed food for Montana's emergency food system. The Network has worked closely with Bear Paw Development Corporation (one of the food and agriculture innovation centers that would benefit from the passage of HB 583). Bear Paw Development provided technical assistance to help the Montana Food Bank Network sift through the process of creating and funding a business and marketing plan and feasibility study for our Processing Center. As a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide food for hungry people, we possess neither the understanding nor the skills to traverse this complicated process. Bear Paw helped us identify funding options for our business plan and has even written grant proposals to secure funding for our plan.

Montana's food and agriculture innovation centers are necessary to assist organizations like ours and other entrepreneurs who are committed to improving food manufacturing and/or alternative energy production in Montana. Many small entrepreneurs like us have a vision for improving economic viability for our state by providing a mechanism through which healthy food grown in Montana can be processed and consumed by Montanans.

The Food and Agricultural Innovation Centers is a necessary vehicle to rebuilding Montana's processing infrastructure through their support of projects like our processing center. By ensuring that these six centers can continue to provide technical assistance to Montana's food and farm entrepreneurs, HB 583 will help Montana retain a greater share of the billions of food and energy dollars Montanans otherwise ultimately send out of state.

Sincerely,

Peggy A. Grimes

Peggy A. Grimes
Executive Director

Peggy Grimes – Executive Director
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FEEDING
AMERICA



Earl Fisher BioFuels
PO Box 386
Chester, MT 59522
406-759-5018



February 18, 2009

Dear Representative Sesso,

I am writing to support the funding request for the Bio Product Innovation Centers (HB 583). I am an agriculture producer who is involved in developing a local value added market for oil seed by producing biodiesel. I see value added agriculture and specifically the bio-based industry as a key component to the future viability of my community and rural Montana.

The Bio Product Innovation Center at Bear Paw Development in Havre has been a valuable team member to Earl Fisher BioFuels from the beginning. We would not have made as much progress without the support, encouragement and expertise of the Bio Product Innovation Center at Bear Paw Development.

It is without hesitation that I urge your strong support to secure funding for the Bio Product Innovation Centers (HB 583).

Best Regards,

Brett Earl

Brett Earl
Partner
Earl Fisher Biofuels
406-759-5018



Bear Paw Development Corporation of Northern Montana

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Annmarie Robinson

February 19, 2009

Rep. Jon Sesso, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Montana House of Representatives
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chairman Sesso and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Bear Paw Development Corporation, a state-recognized Certified Regional Development Corporation that serves a large section of Montana's Hi-Line, strongly encourages your support of HB 583. This legislation will reconnect our state's urban and rural areas through home-grown economic development opportunities in the value-added agriculture and renewable energy sectors of our economy.

Our organization has served as the regional host and technical assistance provider for the Montana Agriculture Innovation Center/Bio-Product Innovation Center since its inception in 2004. While we have worked on multiple projects in the value-added ag and alternative energy arenas, funding to continue to provide this service will cease to exist in January 2010. We have built the necessary capacity to properly serve our rurally-based agricultural and energy-related entrepreneurs, but likely will have to discontinue providing this technical assistance if additional, base-level funding cannot be found.

In 2008 alone, Bear Paw Development's Value Added Agriculture Coordinator was responsible for coordinating more than \$323,000 in public and private investment for quality projects in our rural part of northern Montana. This level of investment would never have materialized without the professional expertise of a trained staff member to lead these individuals to the appropriate funding agency, assist with grant writing and management and work to assure overall project success.

Montana has an incredible opportunity to lead our nation in the development of value-added agriculture and alternative energy projects. It will require a true partnership, however, between the State of Montana and our state's economic development community to make this opportunity become a reality.

We respectfully urge your strong support for HB 583.

Respectfully yours,

Paul Tuss

Executive Director

MONTANA
Cooperative
DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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February 17, 2009

Montana House of Representatives
Appropriations Committee
Capitol Building
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Representatives:

I am writing in support of HB583 which will provide funding for a Montana food and agriculture development program.

The intention is to use centers which have a proven track record of providing quality service in these respective areas. The Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) has part time Cooperative Development Specialists housed in Bear Paw Development (Havre), Beartooth RC&D (Joliet) and Great Northern Development Corp. (Wolf Point) which are centers presently acting in this capacity.

MCDC is support of funding to continue these services.

I would be pleased to visit with you at your request.

Sincerely,



Brian Gion
CEO
Montana Cooperative Development Center